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## **Works of Art, Arts for Work: Caroline Wogan Durieux, the Works Progress Administration, and the U.S. State Department**

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Works of Art, Arts for Work: Caroline Wogan Durieux, the Works Progress  
Administration, and the U.S. State Department

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
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requirements for the degree of

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History

by

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Abstract:

The New Deal was one of the largest government programs implemented in the twentieth century. Yet only recently have historians begun to explore the impact of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) on American culture by studying its smaller programs such as the Federal Writer's, Theatre, and Art Projects. This paper explores the life of Caroline Wogan Durieux, a New Orleans artist, WPA Federal Art Project (FAP) administrator, and representative for the United States' State Department, centering upon Durieux's career from 1917 to 1943. Durieux's work with the FAP, and later the State Department, helped to redefine the role of art in American society by making art widely accessible to the public. With her influential connections in New Orleans society and her commitment to public art, Durieux bridged the gap between art for the privileged few and art for the masses.

Keywords: Caroline Durieux, Works Progress Administration, Federal Art Project, Louisiana



"Taxidermy." Durieux, Caroline. 1953. Ed. Of 5. Louisiana State University Museum of Art. Louisiana Digital Library, hereafter LSU Digital Library. "<http://louisdl.louislibraries.org/u/?CWD,121>" <http://louisdl.louislibraries.org/u/?CWD,121> (Accessed March 23, 2010).

### Introduction

The New Orleans lithograph titled "Taxidermy," featured above, was created in 1953 by renowned artist Caroline Spelman Wogan Durieux. She is most famous for her widely acclaimed satirical lithographs made popular because of their innovative, concise depictions of human imperfections. "Taxidermy" reflects her satire of the upper classes. The lady's hat portrays her as "stylish," while the bird, which sits upon the hat, conveys an association with its wearer.<sup>1</sup> The beady eyes, the beak and nose resemble each other. Moreover, the extended wings of the bird portray the lady and the bird as a product of a

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<sup>1</sup> Caroline Durieux. "Taxidermy" 1953. Edition of 5. Louisiana State University Museum of Art. Louisiana Digital Library, <http://louisdl.louislibraries.org/u/?CWD,121> (Accessed March 23, 2010).

taxidermist. Durieux painted from experience. She recalled in an interview that she had seen this woman while waiting in line at the bus depot. Durieux once said of herself: “I was born into society where outright confrontation with parents, teachers, and clergy was forbidden. I could not speak out against them, but I could draw their pretensions.”<sup>2</sup> For nearly half a century, Durieux recorded her personal experiences with penetrating wit and individuality. As Carl Zigrosser of the Weyhe Gallery of New York City noted, “Her work is her own, personal, original, without outside influence. She belongs to the group of social commentators, satiric, witty, keen and amusing in her observation of the foibles of humanity. She creates “types” and endows them with the truth of life and the enduring memorability of art.”<sup>3</sup> Questioning her motivations and techniques in light of an exhibit of her paintings, a critic wrote,

It strikes us that when she leaves her studio—the artist’s intimate world—and goes out into the street, into the vulgar atmosphere where she encounters human beings, her spirit is converted into a camera that captures everything there is of pain, everything contemptible and ridiculous; afterwards, upon returning to her studio, without notes, without the use of models, she stamps her recollections in her canvases.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Earl D. Retif, March 2-March 19, 1980. *Caroline Wogan Durieux*. New Orleans: Newcomb College Tulane University. Published in conjunction with the exhibition “Caroline Wogan Durieux Five Decades as Printmaker” shown at the Art Department Gallery Newcomb College Tulane University. Biographical File. Newcomb Center For Research on Women, New Orleans, La. Hereafter Newcomb.

<sup>3</sup> Statement by Carl Zigrosser translated from Spanish. Folder 2, Box 3, X:53, Caroline Wogan Durieux Papers, Mss 3827, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, La. Hereafter LSU.

<sup>4</sup> “Exhibit of Paintings by Caroline Durieux,” *Excelsior*, June 17 1934. Folder 2, Box 3, X:53, Caroline Wogan Durieux Papers, Mss 3827, LSU.

In light of her personal experiences as a wife, mother, artist, administrator, politico and teacher, Durieux's artistic vision evolved over time.

Growing up on Esplanade Avenue within the well-to-do New Orleans Creole society, Durieux proved to be a unique woman as early as 1917. After graduating from the Newcomb College of Tulane University with a double Bachelor of Design and Art Education, Durieux opted to use the money set aside for her debut to study advanced work at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts until 1920.<sup>5</sup> Forgoing her debut would come to symbolize the progressive, liberal, and democratic woman she would become later on in life. Durieux is still honored for her art, yet she was much more than an artist. Durieux's genteel background, education, travels, and the way in which she used her social position to network contributed to her many accomplishments. From 1920 until the mid 1930s, Durieux spent several years abroad in Cuba and Mexico City with her husband. In 1937, Durieux worked as a consultant on the Work's Progress Administration's (WPA) Federal Writer's Project (FWP). In 1939 she accepted the position as State Director of the WPA's Federal Art Project (FAP) of Louisiana. As a State Director coming out of a politicized school of art, Durieux helped to democratize the arts by making art public through various FAP projects. Her art and her work with the WPA illuminates the cultural history of Louisiana by portraying the FAP's artists and

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<sup>5</sup> Caroline Durieux, Resume Document. Folder 2:1, Box 2, X:53, 1, Caroline Wogan Durieux Papers, Mss 3827, LSU.



writers preserved and documented histories from hands-on experiences through various forms of artistic media. As a representative for the State Department, Durieux traveled to South America to promote traveling art exhibits for Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "Good Neighbor" policy in 1941. Her involvement with the WPA demonstrates the role women administrators played in encouraging the mechanics of cultural production. As the WPA closed and the U.S. prepared for World War II by improving relations with Latin America, Durieux's representation for the State Department illustrates the role she played in a U.S. attempt at forming a pan-American identity.

In *The Federal Art Project and the Creation of Middlebrow Culture*, historian Victoria Grieve contended that the Great Depression served "as the catalyst that motivated cultural progressives," such as Durieux, "to ask and resolve old questions in new ways."<sup>6</sup> The New Deal created a cultural landscape that was open to cultural progressives and gave women opportunities that they would not have had otherwise. Through her travels abroad, especially in Mexico, Durieux recognized the relationship between the social and economic power of public art as well as its potential as a political vehicle. The WPA and State Department provided Durieux with the terrain to put the ideas she had learned in Mexico into practice. Her social position enabled her to bring together patrons who wanted to support public art by investing in art for the needs of working class people. In an era when social commentary, art, and political innovation were coming together, Durieux put people to work for art and art to work for people. She

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<sup>6</sup> Grieve, *The Federal Art Project*, 83.

made art accessible to middle and lower classes, in urban and rural areas, through regular exposure, exhibitions, and education.

Further exploration of the FAP on a regional basis is required in order to reevaluate its importance within the visual culture of the second half of the twentieth century. Because the WPA was somewhat of an experiment in itself, investigation of the program and its administrators is even more crucial in understanding its revolutionary impact. In 1982 an article in the *New York Times* celebrated FDR's support for the arts. Reflecting the importance of the FAP and its administrators, Kitty Carlisle Hunt, chairman of the State Council on the Arts, stated, "If it hadn't been for F.D.R. and the people around him, legions of artists would have been lost."<sup>7</sup> From an administrative perspective and near the end of her life in 1975, Durieux stated that if the country experienced another depression, "the first thing they would have to do would be to put in something like the WPA."<sup>8</sup> Without government support for the artists during the Depression, Durieux claimed, "We would have had a social revolution."<sup>9</sup> A thorough exploration of what the FAP accomplished in Louisiana by its administrators, artists, and writers creates a building block for further regional studies on the New Deal.

The first generation of New Deal scholarship grappled with politics, economics, and FDR's influence on the evolution of the program.<sup>10</sup> The new generation of New Deal

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<sup>7</sup> Carol Lawson, "Roosevelt Role in Arts to be Marked," *New York Times*, September 23, 1982, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>.

<sup>8</sup> Caroline Durieux Oral History Interview, Mss. 4700.0013, 27, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, La. Hereafter LSU.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> For standard accounts of the New Deal, FDR's influence in the shaping of the New Deal, and its accomplishments see Frank Freidel, *The New Deal and the American People* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall

scholarship consists of more revisionist works. Since the 1980s and 90s, much more attention has been paid to women in the New Deal, works and agencies of the WPA, and the smaller programs of the WPA, such as the Federal Art, Writer's, and Theatre Project. What is still missing are regional studies of the WPA and its contribution to American history. Durieux's work with the WPA provides a building block for such regional studies.

Current New Deal scholarship explores the WPA's Federal Art Project and its role in a kind of cultural production that influenced the creation of a national identity through art.<sup>11</sup> Originally designed to study the cultural and economic effectiveness of the New Deal Art Projects in New York City and State, Francis O'Connor made a first attempt to publish in depth recollections of artists and administrators who worked on the New Deal art projects of the 1930s. O'Connor shows that art in America was not as prevalent in society as it is today. In fact, most Americans had not experienced public art exhibitions until the Depression era. The memoirs of administrators and artists reflect the progressive force behind the New Deal. Similar to the accomplishments of the FAP of Louisiana, the memoirs show how the program brought art education programs to public schools and settlement houses, sent artists to culturally undeveloped regions, circulated

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Inc., 1964); William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal: 1932-1940* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963); Amity Shales, *The Forgotten Man: A New History of the Great Depression* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007); and Nick Taylor, *American Made: The Enduring Legacy of the WPA—When FDR Put the Nation to Work* (New York: Bantam Bell, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> For more information on the WPA's individual art projects see Richard D. McKinzie, *The New Deal for Artists* (New Jersey: Princeton Press, 1973); and John O'Connor and Lorraine Brown, *Free, Adult, Uncensored: The Living History of the Federal Theatre Art Project* (Washington D.C.: New Republic Books, 1978).

traveling exhibitions through the Project's network of Federal Art Galleries, and brought original art and art classes to different corners of the nation through Community Art Centers.<sup>12</sup>

Based on values that were established during the Progressive era, scholars have found that the FAP's artists, administrators, and audiences used art to form a collective movement. From its inception, Edgar Cahill, the National Director of the FAP and focus of current WPA scholarship, sought to draw together major aesthetic forces in America and form, "a sound general movement which maintains art as a vital, functioning part of any cultural scheme."<sup>13</sup> The idea of "art for art's sake" was rejected as the basis for the FAP.

Historian Victoria Grieve shows how the FAP made art accessible to the common man and, "encouraged the development of a national culture."<sup>14</sup> Grieve argues that the FAP implemented middlebrow cultural ideals which, "saw the arts in terms of education and entertainment, as a tool for individual growth, self-improvement, and personal or professional success."<sup>15</sup> Importantly, Grieve shows that the transformation of genteel culture was one of the main principles behind that New Deal's FAP. This was accomplished by the project's progressive nature that was established by Cahill and its administrators. Illuminating the role of administrators such as Durieux, in the FAP,

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<sup>12</sup> Francis O'Connor ed., *The New Deal Art Projects: An Anthology of Memoirs* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1972), 4.

<sup>13</sup> Francis O'Connor, *Art for the Millions: Essays from the 1930s by Artists and Administrators of the WPA Federal Art Project* (Conneticut: New York Graphic Society LTD., 1973), 18.

<sup>14</sup> Victoria Grieve, *The Federal Art Project and the Creation of the Middlebrow Culture* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2009) 4.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

Grieve claims that, “Progressive educators envisioned the possibilities of social improvement through the widespread diffusion of the arts, and represent a crucial component in the emergence of middlebrow culture, rejecting the elitism of genteel Victorian culture and avant-garde modernism, while recognizing the educational and uplifting possibilities of the arts.”<sup>16</sup> Durieux confirms Grieve’s contention that, “the Great Depression would provide the opportunity for experienced social workers and educators in the Roosevelt administration to apply cultural solutions to social and economic problems.”<sup>17</sup>

WPA Art Programs differed greatly from region to region. By looking at what the FAP created on a state to state basis, it is evident that the administration had a large influence on what was created. Historians Marlene Park and Gerald E. Markowitz state that the FAP, “fostered regionalization because of its commitment to public art that people in each locality would recognize as authentic.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, rendering the study of each state’s program as crucial in order to fully understand how the Art Program impacted American history. Combining regionalization studies with the FAP’s promotion of a national identity, art historian Jonathan Harris argues that, “the FAP, through its discourses and programs, was an attempt to reconstruct “society” around the bases of

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<sup>16</sup> Grieve, *The Federal Art Project*, 35.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>18</sup> Marlene Park and Gerald E. Markowitz, *Democratic Vistas: Post Offices and Public Art in the New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), 68.

citizenship, law and national culture...”<sup>19</sup> By studying its administrators and directors, we can better understand issues of regionalization, nationalism, and the WPA.

Moreover, women’s roles as directors and administrators of New Deal programs are understudied and little understood. Recent scholarship builds upon Susan Ware’s exploration of women’s networks who held political and government positions in the New Deal. To demonstrate their importance to women’s social progress in the New deal, Ware studies how these women, who came from political families, were able to use their connections with each other and male politicians to pursue a more active position within the political sphere and influence social legislation. Kristin Downey recently recognized Frances Perkins as a key New Deal enactor. She was FDR’s Secretary of Labor whose influences impacted the passing of legislation and social welfare during the New Deal era. Martha S. Swain presents a similar study of Ellen S. Woodward, another influential figure in New Deal history. Durieux is a significant regional actor in the New Deal—her name needs to be added to Ware’s group of important women New Dealers.

#### Durieux’s Mexican Years (1920-1935)

Caroline Spelman Wogan Durieux was born on January 22, 1896 to Anna Lovisa Spelman and Charles Nicholas Wogan Jr. in New Orleans, Louisiana. One biographer of Durieux claims that Durieux’s parents represented a peculiar, “blend of Yankee Huguenots and New Orleans Irish-Creoles.”<sup>20</sup> For elementary school, Durieux attended

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<sup>19</sup> Jonathan Harris, *Federal Art and National Culture: The Politics of Identity in New Deal America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 12.

<sup>20</sup> Ann Michelle Moore, "The life and work of Caroline Spelman Wogan Durieux (1896-1989)". M.A. thesis, Tulane University, 1992. In *Dissertations & Theses @ University of New Orleans* [database on-

the Misses Finney School, an all-girls school for upper-class families. In high school she went to the Cenas Institute, which was a bilingual (French-English) academy for girls. Durieux's elite education allowed her to begin painting at a young age. Her training in art at Newcomb and in Pennsylvania fueled her desire for education and travel while her class status gave her the means to do so. Throughout her life, she traveled to Cuba, Mexico, South America, Europe and the Far East, and all over the United States. In 1918, Durieux chose not to return to the Pennsylvania Academy in the fall. Instead she supervised women's sewing chapters in southern Louisiana's franco-phone parishes as a field secretary.<sup>21</sup>

In 1920, Durieux married her childhood neighbor and friend, Pierre Durieux. Together they moved to Havana, Cuba, where Pierre held an upper management position with General Motors in 1920. In 1920, American capitalism fueled the rise of global corporations like General Motors. The proximity of the US to Latin America also made international expansion enticing to American companies. In the 1920s, Havana was a prime vacation destination for wealthy Americans and an ideal location for GM. Cheap Latin American labor and agricultural and industrial resources also encouraged the expansion of large American corporations. In Havana, Durieux bore her first and only son, Charles Wogan Durieux.<sup>22</sup> She contracted an infection during childbirth. The family moved back to the U.S. to make recuperation easier for Caroline, living in the Wogan's

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line]; available from <http://www.proquest.com> (publication number AAT 1351586; accessed March 1, 2010).6.

<sup>21</sup> Anon. "An Artist's Odyssey,"10, Biographical File, Newcomb.

<sup>22</sup> Durieux, Resume Document, 1.

summer home in Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi for six months until they returned to Havana.<sup>23</sup> In Cuba, Durieux worked as an interior decorator but spent most of her time painting and drawing.

When Mr. Durieux was promoted to become the Latin American corporate representative of GM in 1926, Durieux moved to Mexico City where they lived until 1935.<sup>24</sup> The rise of capitalism and globalization fueled cultural exchange, which is evident from Durieux's time spent in Mexico City. Durieux did not live the grand lifestyle of a typical executive wife abroad. Instead, she formed a unique camaraderie with a group of revolutionary Mexican artists that included Diego Rivera, Jose Clementé Orzoco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros.<sup>25</sup> Though Durieux moved to Mexico City for her husband's job, other American intellectuals were moving to the city for its rich cultural life. Some of these intellectuals formed circles with the revolutionary Mexican artists. Anita Brenner, a journalist, historian, anthropologist, art critic, and creative writer was a part of this circle as well. Brenner was born to a Jewish immigrant family in Mexico.<sup>26</sup> Like Durieux, Brenner recorded the history of Mexico through books and articles. Brenner was also a supporter of liberal and radical causes. A fan of Durieux, Brenner critiqued her work as well. Durieux was a part of this intellectual community that was responsible for connecting American and Mexican cultures as well as a part of the

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<sup>23</sup> Moore, "The life and work of Caroline Spelman Wogan Durieux," 40.

<sup>24</sup> Doug MacCash, "Conflicted Caroline: Ridiculing the Road not Taken," *Times Picayune*, March 28, 2008.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Susannah Joel, Glusker, *Anita Brenner: A Mind of Her Own* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998) xi.



women administrators of the New Deal. This camaraderie of an artistic intellectual community shaped Durieux's artistic style as well as her political ideals.

Prior to Durieux's arrival in Mexico City, the country had faced a series of revolutions since 1910. Ruled by Dictator Porfirio Diaz, Mexican citizens, particularly the working class, farmers and peasants, were exploited for the promotion of industry and the pacification of the country. The bourgeoisies' exploitation of the working class fueled the rise of revolutionaries like Pancho Villa, Francisco Madero, Venustiano Carranza, and Emiliano Zapata. These revolutions from below left Mexico under the control of disparate leaders until the 1920s. During a series of revolutions in the 1910s the working class suffered greatly, peasants were exploited on plantations and violence left the country in ruins. Despite and because of the suffering, a group of revolutionary artists evolved to lead what is known as the Mexican Mural Movement.

By the summer of 1920, a new president-elect, Alvaro Obregón, took office and made cultural modernization a priority in domestic policy. Obregón was committed to popular literacy and appointed José Vasconcelos as Minister of Education. Vasconcelos then commissioned Diego Rivera, a renowned muralist and painter, to do a mural at the National Preparatory School. Like Durieux, Rivera's travels in Europe influenced his political ideals and artwork. During the revolutionary period, Rivera traveled to Europe where he encountered Cubism, studied the public art of Renaissance in Italy, and had exhibitions in Paris and Madrid. His time in the Soviet Union influenced his militant political views and he joined the Communist Party in 1922. He almost immediately

became a leader.<sup>27</sup> The government-sponsored murals reflecting his radical political views, attracted other muralists with similar political interests. Soon after, the revolutionary politicians formed an artist union. By 1923, the union held a conference that elected three artists to its Executive Committee: Diego Rivera, Alfaro Siqueiros, and Xavier Guerrero. The union was initially called the *Sindicato Revolucionario de Obreros Técnicos y Plásticos*, and later changed to Revolutionary Union of Technical Workers, Painters, Sculptors, and Allied Trades.<sup>28</sup> Using the Communist Manifesto by Marx and Engels as an inspiration, the union created its own manifesto as well.

The Mural Movement reflected the importance of the artists' dedication to the Mexican people by bringing them together with art. The muralists offered their own interpretations of Mexican history. Rivera and other artists painted the murals to convey how the Mexican sociopolitical conditions affected the people after the revolutions. Inspired by his own political viewpoint, Rivera used his art to protest and portray his Communist beliefs while at the same time, critique the political scene in Mexico. David Craven claims in *Diego Rivera: As Epic Modernist*, that Rivera's murals were intended to be a criticism of the government that paid for them.<sup>29</sup>

The movement proved to be influential to American culture as well. In the 1930s and 1940s Rivera painted murals in San Francisco and Detroit, among other American cities. In 1933, Rivera's painting commissioned by John D. Rockefeller for the RCA

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<sup>27</sup> David Craven, *Diego Rivera: As Epic Modernist* (G.K. Hall & Company, 1997), 65.

<sup>28</sup> Bertram Wolfe, *The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera* (London: Barrie Books Ltd., 1963), 151.

<sup>29</sup> Craven, *Rivera*, 61.

Building at the Rockefeller Center in Manhattan featured a portrait of Lenin. The rising fear of communism in the U.S. led to the mural's destruction in 1934. In less than a decade, the Mexican Muralists were painting in the United States, exhorting the rise of American interest in Mexican art. Shawn Savage in, "Diego Rivera, Mutual Cultural Affinities, and the Detroit Industry Murals," argues that the decline of Europe's cultural and economic hegemony after World War I was the root cause of the marked increase of North American interest in Mexican culture and the decrease in the America's infatuation with Europe. Savage illustrates how the Great Depression altered the intellectual climate by making it more experimental to new forms of artistic expression such as art and literature.

Durieux arrived in Mexico City in 1926, in the midst of the mural movement's heyday. Her social status helped her to be acquainted with Rivera through a letter of introduction from Tulane professor and Mayan archaeologist Franz Blom.<sup>30</sup> Wolfe describes how the relationship between Rivera and Durieux evolved. Aside from his sexual forays, Rivera was often generous to young and struggling artists like Frida Kahlo. While in Mexico City, Durieux was not a struggling artist by any means. However, she was young and still forming her own artistic style. Illustrating Rivera's help to young artists, Wolfe wrote that "his encouragement to fellow artists whose still unrecognized talents aroused the painter's enthusiasm: the courtesy of offering to exchange one of his pictures with an unknown, the timely yet critical word of advice and praise, the

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<sup>30</sup> An Artist's Odyssey,"10.

deliberately publicized purchase of some painting.”<sup>31</sup> The art that Durieux produced in Mexico City reflects her relationship with the muralists because it shared similar views of the importance of political and social issues in cultural life. She paid witness to the exploitation of the working class people by the upper class and bourgeoisie. Her art shows that she recognized the potential of art as a political vehicle in Mexico.

In the 1929 issue of *Mexican Folk-Ways* magazine, an article written by Rivera and dedicated to Durieux discusses his views of her work that was shown in an exhibition organized by Rene d’Harnoncourt, who later became the director of the Museum of Modern Art.<sup>32</sup> The exhibition was held at the Sonora News Company. In the article, Rivera observed that her home in Mexico City showed her profound understanding and great love of the country and how her time in Mexico influenced her power of expression. Rivera described her work as depicting her love for nature, her compassion for the peasants, and her disdain for the bourgeoisie.<sup>33</sup> Soon after this exhibition, Mr. Durieux was promoted again by GM, which forced the family to move to New York City. In New York, Durieux’s artistic talent and social status afforded her the opportunity to meet Carl Zigrosser, the director of the Weyhe Gallery in New York City, who encouraged her to experiment with lithography, the medium for which she would be best known.<sup>34</sup> In 1931, another promotion by GM forced the Durieux family to move back to Mexico. Looking

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<sup>31</sup> Wolfe, *Fabulous Life*, 356.

<sup>32</sup> Moore, "The life and work of Caroline Spelman Wogan Durieux." 49.

<sup>33</sup> Diego Rivera, "On the Work of Carolina Durieux," *Mexican Folk-Ways*, 5, (1929), Folder 2, Box 3, X:53, Caroline Wogan Durieux Papers, Mss 3827, LSU.

<sup>34</sup> John Pope, "Louisiana Satirical Artist Caroline Durieux dies at 93," *The Times Picayune*, November 30, 1989. Caroline Durieux Biographical File, Newcomb.

forward to the move from New York City back to Mexico City, where, according to one biography of Durieux, “they found the artistic and political environment was far more exciting...”<sup>35</sup>

An exhibition of her paintings and drawings was displayed in Mexico City at the Galeria Central in 1934, reflecting her relationship with Rivera and Mexico.<sup>36</sup> In the “town and topics” section of the *El Excelsior* on June 10, 1934, the writer observed her, “relentless insight on the social scene here, and the coming exhibition reflects the sharpness of her conclusions.”<sup>37</sup> Although she was still a young artist in the process of forming her own style, a 1931 article from *The New Yorker* noted the Mexican influence on her early work. Discussing an exhibition at the Weyhe Gallery of unknown women painters, the article claims that Durieux “concerns herself with the foibles of the male as seen in the Latin American countries.”<sup>38</sup> Her impression with the foibles of females seen in Acapulco, Mexico is evident in the lithograph below.

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<sup>35</sup> Moore, “The life and work of Caroline Spelman Wogan Durieux,” 52.

<sup>36</sup> “Caroline Durieux Art Exhibition,” *El Universal Anglo-American*, June 10, 1934. Folder 7, Box 3, X:53, Caroline Wogan Durieux Papers, Mss 3827, LSU.

<sup>37</sup> Untitled article from the *Excelsior*, Mexico City, October 1929. Folder 7, Box 3, X:53, Caroline Wogan Durieux Papers, Mss 3827, LSU.

<sup>38</sup> Untitled article from the *New Yorker*, New York, May 1931. Folder 7, Box 3, X:53, Caroline Wogan Durieux Papers, Mss 3827, LSU.



"Bather." Durieux, Caroline. 1932. LSU Digital Library. " <http://louisdl.louislibraries.org/u/?CWD,97> (Accessed on March 23, 2010).

This lithograph was created in 1932. The scene depicted in the print describes a visit made to Acapulco by Durieux. The beaches were often desolate, which is illustrated in the print along with the keen satire presented by Durieux in her sardonic portrayal of Mexico's upper crust sunbathing on the beaches.



“N.O. Woman’s Portrait By Noted Mexican Artist Arouses Discussion Here,” *Item Tribune New Orleans*, November 21, 1929. Folder 7, Box 3, X:53, Caroline Wogan Durieux Papers. Mss 3827, LSU.

In 1929, the Arts and Crafts Club on Royal Street in New Orleans exhibited Rivera’s portrait of Durieux.<sup>39</sup> The article in the New Orleans *Item Tribune* discussed the potential controversial issues that may have evolved from the portrait and praised the brilliance of it as well. The portrait aroused discussion and attention for the connection between Rivera, a Communist, and Durieux, a well-known artist in New Orleans. At this point in time it was evident what both Durieux and Rivera had in common, namely their realism. The intimate cultural exchanges that were made in Mexico continued to influence Durieux’s political views, artwork, and career path. Her lithographs of the 1930s and 1940s “rank as some of the finest satirical pieces ever made.”<sup>40</sup> It is evident that upon her return to the U.S., Durieux’s motivations to work with the WPA and State Department revolved around her political views as a liberal progressive Democrat. Her

<sup>39</sup> Anon., “N.O. Woman’s Portrait By Noted Mexican Artist Arouses Discussion Here,” *Item Tribune New Orleans*, November 21, 1929. Folder 7, Box 3, X:53, Caroline Wogan Durieux Papers, Mss 3827, LSU.

<sup>40</sup> Earl D. Retif, “Caroline Wogan Durieux 1896-1989,” Caroline Durieux Biographical File, Newcomb.

efforts to help democratize the arts shows that Durieux was both a community organizer and advocate for public art.

In 1936, her husband's illness forced the family to return to New Orleans. Living in the French Quarter, the people of New Orleans became her prime subjects. The Mexican influence is apparent in the work that she created upon her return to the United States. Though Durieux did not paint the same subjects as her Mexican colleagues—humble peasants and scenes of oppression—she painted the Mexican bourgeoisie satirically as she did the upper classes of New Orleans. Durieux is known for mocking the high society into which she had been born. She often painted the sneering and materialistic Uptown women. A recent article from 2008 pointed out that her, “leftist leanings are evident in the astringent prints that line the Newcomb Gallery walls.”<sup>41</sup> The *Times Picayune* art critic describes Durieux and her prints in New Orleans, “From clownish corporate golfers, to preening priests, to beady-eyed playboys, Durieux made a career of poking fun at the pride and pretensions of the Great Gatsby class.”<sup>42</sup> Durieux used art as a political vehicle.

As her subject matter changed in New Orleans, traces of Mexico interlaced with her new work. In 1936, Durieux created her “North American Series,” eight works satirizing the overabundance of the United States bourgeoisie living in Mexico City. Her work shown at a Chicago bridge event in 1936 was discussed in *Chicago's American* as having, “a typically Mexican touch, whether in the bronze skins of so many of the subjects or the cacti at doorsills, and they all were done Mme. Durieux tells me, with her

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<sup>41</sup> MacCash, “Conflicted Caroline.”

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.



tongue in her cheek.”<sup>43</sup> The article described Durieux the same way that critics and writers do today: “It’s good to find an artist who confesses she paints the funny side of life.”<sup>44</sup> Her experiences in Mexico clearly not only influenced her own artwork, but her career direction as well.

#### Durieux’s Role in the WPA’s Federal Art Project of Louisiana (1935-41)

Through her experiences abroad, Durieux paid witness to how the upper classes’ exploitation of the lower classes could limit cultural opportunities. She believed that art should be accessible for everyone, an idea that influenced her direction for the Federal Art Project. Durieux recognized the social, economic, and political power of art and the New Deal gave her the opportunity to put her ideas into practice. She helped to make art accessible to middle and lower classes through exhibitions and education. Along with being an artist and a mother in New Orleans, Durieux began to work for Lyle Saxon on the Federal Writer’s Project and the Newcomb College at Tulane University in 1938.<sup>45</sup> At Newcomb, Durieux worked as an art instructor, teaching painting and drawing. Because Durieux was well off, she worked as a special illustrator for the FWP at no cost.<sup>46</sup>

The Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935 led to the formation of the WPA. The WPA in New Orleans is responsible for creating City Park and the City Park Rose Garden, which is now the City Park Botanical Garden, roads, fountains, a golf

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<sup>43</sup> Anon., “Mrs. J.T. Ryerson and Prince Team for Bridge Event,” *Chicago’s American*, February 2, 1936. Folder 7, Box 3, X:53, Caroline Wogan Durieux Papers, Mss 3827, LSU.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Durieux, Resume Document, 1.

<sup>46</sup> Durieux Interview, 13.

course, City Park Stadium (now Tad Gormley Stadium), Audubon Park, and more. The WPA rebuilt the Audubon Zoo and improved the Cabildo Museum and Isaac Delgado Museum, which are now the Louisiana State Museum and the New Orleans Museum of Modern Art, respectively. On a national level, the WPA is responsible for building or improving more than 2,500 hospitals, 5,900 school buildings, 1,000 airports landing fields, and nearly 13,000 playgrounds.<sup>47</sup>

The WPA's Federal Artist Project was a large program dedicated to the plastic arts and was connected to a wider program called the Federal Project No. 1, which included drama, music, and writing. Administered by the rules of the WPA, the FAP began in 1935 and ended in 1943. The FAP's mission was to employ artists who needed relief and to make art public. The artwork that was produced by the WPA preserved American culture in a multitude of ways. The FAP accomplished more than its initial goal of just creating jobs for the unemployed. What the Writer's Project, Theatre Project, and Art Project created and accomplished continues to influence American culture today. Historians Arnold Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon correctly point out in *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization*, that New Orleans has never been an industrial city; it also has been neglected in cultural histories. A regional examination of the FWP of Louisiana, through Durieux, adds to the exploration of the cultural and social developments of New Orleans. It also helps to better illuminate the role the FWP and women played in the city's cultural production. New Orleans is one of the oldest and most culturally diverse

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<sup>47</sup> William E. Leuchtenberg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963) 126.

cities in the United States and its unique history is recorded in the works created by the FAP and FWP. Durieux's also contributed drawings for FWP projects such as *Gumbo Ya-Ya: Folk Tales of Louisiana* and the *New Orleans City Guide*. This work demonstrates the role she played in the cultural production of New Orleans during the New Deal years.<sup>48</sup> Both literary sources reflect how the "federal government established its ownership in America's historical and cultural memory."<sup>49</sup> Published in 1938 and reissued in 1952 and 1983, the *New Orleans City Guide* was the first major accomplishment of the FWP of Louisiana. As Harry L. Hopkins noted, "The writers of the Federal Writer's Project of New Orleans have, I think, succeeded in conveying the quality of their romantic and powerful city; the sense of its strength and destiny, as well as its gaiety, ease, and its art of living."<sup>50</sup> The guide was created by photographers, historians, and writers and showed what was important about New Orleans culture during the Great Depression. It focused on places like the mysterious above-ground cemeteries and the French Quarter, historical interpretations of New Orleans education, transportation, architecture, and more. *Gumbo Ya-Ya* preserved Louisiana's unique culture as well by recording its folk tales. From this book a vivid picture of Louisiana's culture emerges—its history, architecture, seemingly endless bayous, narrow streets

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<sup>48</sup> For a description of the artwork done by Durieux in *Gumbo Ya-Ya* and the *New Orleans City Guide* see Moore, "The life and work of Caroline Spelman Wogan Durieux."

<sup>49</sup> Federal Writer's Project of the Works Progress Administration, *New Orleans City Guide* (Garrett County Press, 2009), 1A.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, I.

within the French Quarter, plantations, cemeteries, Creole culture, Voodoo, and ancient Oak trees, are also painted within these folk tales.

Colleagues through the FWP, Durieux and Saxon collaborated on the artwork for *Gumbo Ya-Ya* and the *New Orleans City Guide*. The way in which Durieux worked with writer's on the project shows how her experiences abroad influenced her decisions to look past race, ethnicity, and class. The relationship between Saxon and Durieux reflects how the WPA extracted history from not only the work produced but also through its administrators, artists, and writers. Durieux consulted with Saxon regularly about what was to be done on certain projects; however, the freedom of the system allowed her to cross class and cultural boundaries in the process of working on the projects. Durieux's work with the FWP sheds light on the complexities of New Orleans culture from the perspective of a white woman of the upper class. For example, the preparation for *Gumbo Ya-Ya* shows how the free hand of administrators such as Saxon gave the writers and artists creative freedom as well.

Bringing necessary attention to the dynamics of race relations in the Jim Crow South and in New Orleans, the FWP allowed Durieux to cross cultural borders. In light of her experiences in Mexico, it is easy to understand why she was comfortable with this. She worked with Hazel Breaux, a writer, and a man she referred to as "McKinney," an African-American writer. As an artist, Durieux would not sketch on site, instead she would observe and sketch later. Together, Durieux, Breaux and McKinney visited several different places in New Orleans such as African-American funerals, churches,

neighborhoods, and a nightclub.<sup>51</sup> These forays portray the magnitude of the racial divide in New Orleans. Saxon wanted to know if there was any Voodoo going on in the city. When she and McKinney went to see a woman named Julia, the Queen of the Voodoo, he introduced Durieux as a woman from Milwaukee. Durieux claimed that, “he didn’t want her to identify me as a New Orleans woman.”<sup>52</sup> Going to meet Julia also shows how sacred the practice of Voodoo was at this time. To ensure an accurate interpretation of Julia as the Queen of Voodoo, McKinney insisted that Durieux acted as a shoplifter needing to know which side on Canal Street would be best for shoplifting. Durieux’s interpretation of this experience was that Voodoo was used as a business when she said, “she expected money for this, you see, because she was helping me to shoplift.”<sup>53</sup>

Durieux and McKinney visited black New Orleans neighborhoods as well. Reflecting the racial dynamics of these neighborhoods, Durieux claimed that because of his race, McKinney was always invited to lunch and she and Breaux were not. Her adventures in these neighborhoods are insightful with regards to the role religion played in predominately black neighborhoods. From these encounters, Durieux described the religious diversity of New Orleans. Reaffirming Logsdon and Hirsch, she claimed that uptown was black Protestant, downtown New Orleans blacks were Catholic, and in the Catholic areas Voodoo was popular. Black Protestants were often called spiritualists.

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<sup>51</sup> Durieux Interview, 15.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 17.

Durieux assisted in spiritualist meetings, where speaking in unknown tongues was common. She said that some of them were, “very strange.”<sup>54</sup>

Durieux’s experience at an uptown black church helps to elucidate the complexity of the African-American culture in New Orleans. Illustrating religious traits from the city’s Native American and African past, Durieux described an episode in which she and McKinney went to a church near Audubon Park on Tchoupitoulas Street. She claimed that at the church a small group of blacks held a prayer meeting of some kind. Durieux said that it was the strangest little church she ever saw: “You are not going to believe this when I tell you. It had an altar that was to the honor of the Black Hawk.”<sup>55</sup> The Black Hawk was an Indian brave whose name had come down. Huey P. Long was also honored as well, highlighting political issues within hybrid religious practice. African Americans identified with Long's compassion for the working and under class people of the city as well as his somewhat socialist leanings. That the members of the church were honoring a Native American spirit shows how complex African American religions were in New Orleans in the late 1930s. It reflects the Mardi Gras Indian’s influence on the African American identity in New Orleans. Some African Americans identified with the Indians for a sense of power and heritage and formed their own religions with traditions from their African and American past.

Durieux’s relationship with Saxon led to her position with the WPA’s FAP of Louisiana. Being an accredited administrator for the FWP, Saxon recommended Durieux

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<sup>54</sup> Durieux Interview, 18.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

to the Washington headquarters of the WPA. Durieux was an ideal candidate for the position because WPA administrators had to be financially stable. She was employed with Newcomb as an art instructor, teaching painting, drawing, and anatomy. The administrators also had to be experts in their field, which helped to make the FAP successful. Bringing on distinguished writers and artists, such as Saxon and Durieux, as administrators made the program successful.<sup>56</sup> This also allowed the government to save money because they did not have to invest in training programs for their administrators.

The FAP employed some 5,000 mural and easel artists, printmakers, sculptors, poster artists, and art teachers. Harry Hopkins persuaded FDR to create the FAP in late 1935. Hopkins hired Holger Cahill as director for his established national reputation as a, “modern art collector and an expert on American folk art.”<sup>57</sup> Cahill had worked at the Newark Museum, MOMA, and Colonial Williamsburg. Like Durieux, Cahill’s, “progressive cultural philosophy mirrored New Deal appeals to the common man.”<sup>58</sup> Cahill’s experiences abroad also influenced his belief that, “widespread access to art was fundamental to basic democratic rights.”<sup>59</sup> The FAP reflects government support for, “broad access to the fine arts, widespread education, and the redefinition of art as a

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<sup>56</sup> Like Durieux, Hallie Flanagan, a drama instructor, the first woman to be awarded the Guggenheim fellowship, and the Director of the FAP’s Theatre Project, John O’Connor and Lorraine Brown in, *Free, Adult, Uncensored: The Living History of the Federal Theatre Project*, illustrate how she “broadened the project in every way possible by encouraging vaudeville, variety, and circus productions and insisted that educational projects be a part of every unit.”

<sup>57</sup> Grieve, *The Federal Art Project*, 88.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

commodity available to all Americans.”<sup>60</sup> Its progressive administrators like Durieux helped to make this possible.

The FAP celebrated all levels of ability and emerging styles, like expressionism and abstract art. To accommodate the artists’ unusual schedules, Cahill did not require that they punch a time clock. Cahill set production quotas according to the amount of work given the size of the canvas, which gave watercolorists three weeks to produce a painting, an oil painter four to six, and printmakers a month to produce a lithograph or block print.<sup>61</sup>

The works of the arts projects united Americans beyond the boundaries of race, class, and gender. It even supported immigrants from Europe and Latin America. Following FDR’s progressive agenda, the FAP Louisiana brought art classes to public schools for the first time, employed black artists, and gave women administrative positions. The WPA provided children and adults the opportunity to go to a play and to study paintings and drawings via free art and music classes. Playwrights, musicians, and actors performed in theaters while the work of local artists were seen and taught in parks, schools, churches, and community centers.

Like Durieux, Angela Gregory, state supervisor of the WPA FAP and Terese Zimmerman, supervisor of the WPA Delgado Art Project, worked hard in executing the projects to best serve the community. Gregory was a well-known New Orleans sculptor.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Grieve, *The Federal Art Project*, 83.

<sup>61</sup> Nick Taylor. *American-Made: The Enduring Legacy of the WPA—When FDR Put the Nation to Work*. (New York: Bantam Bell: 2008) 271.

<sup>62</sup> National Art Week. November 17, 1941. Series Number- 07.54, Project- Art. Series title- Federal Art Project. WPA Photographs. New Orleans Public Library Website,



A bronze bust by Gregory was shown at the preview of the central exhibit of National Art Week in New Orleans at the Arts & Crafts Club. National Art Week was a WPA FAP sponsored event in association with the Art Association of New Orleans and the week long exhibition of New Orleans artists. The chairman, Thomas B. Watson announced that he would purchase one painting and one piece of sculpture from each state. Louisiana's winner was WPA artist Joe Donaldson. He was paid \$50 for his watercolor "Gretna Gothic."<sup>63</sup> The photo below shows Donaldson's painting exhibited in the front of the Arts & Crafts Club on Royal Street.



National Art Week. November 17, 1941. Series Number- 07.51. Project- Art. Series title- Federal Art Project. WPA Photographs, New Orleans Public Library Website, hereafter N.O.P.L Website. (Accessed March 22, 2010).

To educate the community, National Art Week held a youth educational exhibit at the YMHA during Art Week as well. Students from Eleanor McMain High School, a public school, along with Newman School and Metairie Country Day School were represented

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<http://www.neworleanspubliclibrary.org/~nopl/photos/wpa/images/07/07541.jpg>. (Accessed March 22, 2010).

<sup>63</sup> National Art Week, 1941, 07.51.

<http://www.neworleanspubliclibrary.org/~nopl/photos/wpa/images/07/07511.jpg> (Accessed on March 22, 2010).

at the exhibit. The National Art Week featured a program in New Orleans, “art and cultural center of the South,” which was an educational exhibit for art students in private, public and parochial schools. Art teachers took their students on tours of the exhibits to encourage and inspire them to enter works of their own art.<sup>64</sup> The photo below shows girls from Eleanor McMain High School studying the works of contemporary American artists at the Isaac Delgado Museum of Art.<sup>65</sup>



National Art Week. November 17, 1941. Series Number- 07.62. Series title- Federal Art Project, Project-Art. WPA Photographs, N.O.P.L Website.  
<http://www.neworleanspubliclibrary.org/~nopl/photos/wpa/images/07/07625.jpg>. (Accessed on March 22, 2010)

The WPA’s Delgado Art Museum Project played a huge role in the cultural production of New Orleans as well and was also supervised by women, namely Ethel Hutson and Terese Zimmerman. In 1935, the FAP’s first unit was opened in the Isaac Delgado Museum of Art, which is now the New Orleans Museum of Art (NOMA), to do

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<sup>64</sup> National Art Week, 1941, 07.62. <http://www.neworleanspubliclibrary.org/~nopl/photos/wpa/wpa07.htm>. (Accessed on March 22, 2010).

<sup>65</sup> National Art Week, 1941, 07.62. <http://www.neworleanspubliclibrary.org/~nopl/photos/wpa/wpa07.htm>. (Accessed on March 22, 2010).

cataloging and research on art and artists in New Orleans and throughout Louisiana to index and prepare data for use and publication in the museum library.<sup>66</sup> Other responsibilities were to, “identify, classify, repair, arrange, and gather data relative to museum pieces.”<sup>67</sup> Importantly this project compiled Delgado’s own reference material, which is still used today. The data was compiled from old city directories, vital statistics, baptismal archives, old newspapers, court records in French and in English, old guide books and the few catalogues of art exhibitions available; and from personal interviews with artists.<sup>68</sup> This research compiled a basic list of biographies called, *Artists in New Orleans* from 1717 to 1938.

In 1937, the project was transferred to the direct supervision of the Women’s and Professional Division of the WPA, and workers carried on research. Illuminating how the FAP preserved New Orleans culture, workers catalogued paintings, statuary, and other objects of art in public buildings in New Orleans.<sup>69</sup> They began with the objects in City Hall. The individual study of a portrait was made with close detail in that the workers would examine the style of dress, the furniture or accessories in the picture, the frame, and the technique of the artist. If no records were found on the picture to determine where it came from the art could tell its own story based upon historical background.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Report on Three Years’ Research on Artists in New Orleans 171-1938, 1. Works Progress Administration Delgado Art Museum Project. W.P.A. Collection. New Orleans Museum of Art. Hereafter NOMA.

<sup>67</sup> Affidavit as to ownership of property signed by Robert S. Maestri. February 18, 1938. W.P.A Form E-31. W.P.A. Collection. NOMA.

<sup>68</sup> Report on Three Years’ Research, on Artists, 2.

<sup>69</sup> Report on Three Years’ Research on Art Objects in Public Buildings New Orleans, LA., 1.W.P.A. Collection. NOMA.

<sup>70</sup> Report on Three Years’ Research on Art Objects, 2.

Importantly, the records, interviews with historians and artists that were compiled by FAP workers along with the research conducted by the Historic Buildings Survey and the Archives Project in the U.S. Customhouse, was the beginning of the New Orleans City Guide. Zimmerman stated in a report, "...finally, the Federal Writers' Project has offered to make the results of these researches into a City Hall Guide."<sup>71</sup> The Delgado Art Museum Project and its accomplishments sheds light onto women's influences on the FAP of Louisiana and shows how these accomplishments fueled the production of the *New Orleans City Guide*.

Durieux became the State Director of the Federal Art Project in 1939. The way in which she used her social position to network shows how she accomplished her administrative duties. In 1939, the Delgado Art Museum Project was still operating. However as State Director of the FAP, Durieux focused on other aspects of the project. She was more interested in hands-on projects and bringing art to people. Her duties ranged from finding funding for the projects, allocating completed paintings and sculptures to tax-supported public agencies in the state of Louisiana, hiring artists, determining if the art was professional, and coordinating art educational programs in public and private schools. A large part of Durieux's job consisted of finding the funding that was needed. Each sculpture, painting, or mural required sponsorship before it could be made. All works produced under the FAP remained as the property of the federal

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<sup>71</sup> Report on Three Years' Research on Art Objects, 2.

government.<sup>72</sup> Washington funded some of the art supplies and gave Durieux a small amount of money to travel. Reflecting the internal setbacks of the FAP, correspondence with Washington often proved to be a long process. Durieux needed the approval of the directors in Washington before any work or project could be launched. This process forced Durieux to plan which work was to be undertaken, the sponsors' contribution, and where the work or works were to be placed.<sup>73</sup> Quite often she was forced to contact one administrator in order to reach another.

Since most WPA correspondence was made through mail, Washington knew they would not have as much control over the projects, so hiring, and the quality of the art was determined by Durieux. A majority of the conversations discussing the technicalities of the program occurred between Thomas C. Parker (the FAP's Assistant Director in Washington), and Durieux. The chaos of the program is apparent in a letter from Durieux to Audrey McMahon, the Assistant to the Director of the New York Federal Art Project. Durieux asked McMahon what brand of oil paints she used on the FAP in New York, among other questions regarding art supplies. Durieux complained that the artists were unsatisfied with their material in Louisiana.<sup>74</sup> Reflecting how one state influenced another state in shaping the project, Durieux wrote McMahon that, "Knowing how successful your Project is, it occurred to me that you are the person to help me solve this problem."<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Letter from Robert Armstrong Andrews (Assistant to the Director of FAP) to Durieux, May 29, 1929, in General Correspondence File ("State Series") 651.315-651.3159. 0076-0078. Roll 19. Louisiana section of the WPA. National Archives Microfilm Publications M1367. National Archives.

<sup>73</sup> Letter from Andrews to Durieux, May 29, 1929, 0076-0078.

<sup>74</sup> Letter from Durieux to McMahon, February 16, 1939, 0020.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

Then McMahon forwarded the letter to Parker and Parker responded to Durieux nearly three weeks later. Again this demonstrates the important role of the administrators and shows that despite needing the approval of Washington, as long as Durieux had sponsors she could do what she thought was necessary.

Durieux brought together patrons for the needs of working class people by using her social status to network and raise funds for the project. She called upon wealthy friends to make donations. For instance, Durieux wrote her friend Bob a letter on February 5, 1939, explaining the art project and its need for funding. She illustrated how the project would be beneficial to the community by mentioning the talent of three graduate students who needed assistance of the project and that she was unable to help them without a larger quota.<sup>76</sup> Like Rivera, this reflects how Durieux, with much compassion, used the FAP as a vehicle to help younger artists. She tirelessly worked to get as much money from the city for the project as possible. Surely her social position in New Orleans Uptown society also helped her to secure these crucial private funds. Without hesitation, Mayor Robert Maestri gave her \$300.<sup>77</sup> Another source of income for the project came from the placement of some of the artwork. For example, Durieux allocated four paintings to the Intake and Certification Bureau and made plans to paint a mural for the new parish courthouse in New Iberia.<sup>78</sup> The projects were approved as long as Durieux made an effort to loan art works to public agencies. The accumulation of a

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<sup>76</sup> Letter from Durieux to Bob, February 5, 1939, 0012.

<sup>77</sup> Durieux Interview, 4.

<sup>78</sup> Letter from Durieux to Holger Cahill, February 17, 1939, 0017.

sponsors fund would help carry some of the non-labor costs of the project.<sup>79</sup>

The work would be allocated on a permanent loan basis to tax supported public agencies such as post offices, libraries, and courthouses. Reaffirming the success of the project, WPA art is still on view throughout the country. For example, the 69 Merritt Parkway Bridges, designed by George L. Dunkelberger, reflect 1930s architectural styles like Art Deco, Art Moderne, French Renaissance, Gothic, Neoclassicism, and Rustic. The bridges, connecting southwestern Connecticut to New York, were designed to relieve traffic from another freeway.<sup>80</sup> Likewise, the bridges in New Orleans' enormous City Park were created by FAP artists, Enrique Alferez, a Mexican born Louisiana artist, is famous for a number of relief sculptures that he created for City Park, Charity Hospital, and the New Orleans Lakefront Airport. Alferez was listed as an artist selected and hired by Durieux, which is found in a list of the members of the State Advisory Committee of the FAP of Louisiana. Durieux's decision to hire a Mexican artist proves how her years in Mexico influenced her direction of the FAP in Louisiana. It also shows who was working under Durieux, reflecting the types of artists she employed. This provides a glimpse into New Orleans' larger cultural landscape. Artists were particularly selected if they were on relief. Not all of the artists on relief were of great caliber. Durieux's experience as an artist helped her decide how to place artists on projects according to their ability. For example, towards the end of the FAP's existence and in preparation for World War II, the

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<sup>79</sup> Letter from Durieux to Thomas C. Parker, March 23, 1939, 0033.

<sup>80</sup> Tina Susman, "Preserving the Merritt Parkway's bridges to the past," the *Los Angeles Times*, October 27, 2009.

Art Projects made propaganda posters to help form a collective understanding in the American public in support of the war. The state government sent Durieux fifteen ladies from the sewing project that she had to find work for. At this point most of the artists were taken up as draftsmen at the Michoud Plant, leaving only four artists available to work. Durieux had the four artists design the posters while the fifteen women converted them to silk-screen posters.<sup>81</sup>

Similarly, using the Index of American Design as a way to employ more artists, Durieux assigned artists to produce pieces for the Index of American Design.<sup>82</sup> Her art skills and experience played an important role in these decisions. The Index of American Design was created in 1935 by the WPA/FAP as part of its broader national program. Its purpose was to record the history of American decorative and utilitarian design from the earliest days of colonization until the late nineteenth-century through a series of portfolios in black and white, pictorially and graphically. Four to five hundred artists were employed throughout the country to make colored drawings or paintings of selected objects in public and private collections. According to historian Adolph Glassgold, “it is not exaggeration to say that many of the plates done by the Index artists are without parallel in the field of illustration by reason of their high fidelity to the original object, their accuracy of color and draftsmanship, their sense of material and texture.”<sup>83</sup> The art stemmed from a diversity of objects, such as glassware, ceramics, costumes, textiles,

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<sup>81</sup> Durieux Interview, 2.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> *History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the Web*, Center for History and New Media. George Mason University. <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5102/>. (Accessed March 22, 2010).



metalwork, toys, furniture, and anything that was characteristic or a reflection of the diverse modes of life in the U.S. In the interest of preserving and documenting Louisiana culture, Durieux chose work that she deemed important enough to be recorded.<sup>84</sup> For instance, Louisiana artists produced more than a hundred plates of costumes typical of ante-bellum New Orleans. The works of the Index of American Design is used today as an important piece of American visual history from the Depression-era. It can be found at the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C.

Though the FAP in Louisiana was segregated within the system, Durieux's direction for African American artists shows that she was an egalitarian within the boundaries of Jim Crow. It also shows that she recognized the FAP's ability to put art to work for people of all races and ethnicities. To understand how the WPA encouraged cultural production amongst Jim Crow laws sheds light onto race relations in New Orleans, a city whose history of cultural exchange is tied to Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, and Europe. Amongst a "separate but equal" society, Durieux's decision to hire Mexican and black artists, coupled with her desire to work with black writers on the FWP, shows how the formation of her Mexican relationships taught her to see beyond race and ethnicity. Depicting her feelings about race and its affect on hiring artists Durieux said, "But I had a feeling that an artist is an artist and it doesn't make a difference what color he is."<sup>85</sup> While other New Orleans WPA projects gave African Americans on relief no other choice but to work as hard laborers, Durieux's

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<sup>84</sup> Durieux Interview, 3.

<sup>85</sup> Moore, "The life and work of Caroline Spelman Wogan Durieux," 89.

administration allowed African American writers and artists to continue being artists. In her interview in 1975, Durieux stressed the importance of the WPA's ability to save artists as artists. It is uncertain as to which types of relief jobs would have been assigned to artists if the FAP had not been created.

In 1939, Durieux sent Thomas C. Parker (a WPA State Administrator), a summary of the project's progress and plans for expansion. Her plans for African American artists and their communities were separate from those of white artists. Durieux stated that Myron Lechay and their two African American artists Harold Pierce and Lawrence Jones were organizing a "Negro art center" sponsored by Dillard University and the Dryades Street Branch (colored) of the New Orleans Public Library. Durieux stated that, "this art center will be in the Negro section, at the People's Community Center, Reverend Carter's Church, 2009 Loyola Street."<sup>86</sup>



National Art Week. November 17, 1941. Series Number- 07.16. Project- Art. Series title- Federal Art Project. WPA Photographs. N.O.P.L. Website. "<http://nutrias.org/~nopl/photos/wpa/images/07/07161.jpg>"

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<sup>86</sup> Letter from Durieux to Thomas C. Parker, May 25, 1939, 0068.

Since the WPA guidelines and Jim Crow laws coexisted at the time, Durieux identified black artists separately from white artists. Moreover, she discussed a collection that was being made among the African American artists to sponsor a mural at the Negro branch of the Public Library for which Harold Pierce would be painting the mural.<sup>87</sup> In rural and urban areas, Durieux cultivated a technical art training for African Americans and arranged art classes for African American children, since they were not offered in their schools.<sup>88</sup> Durieux's direction for African American artists shows not only her many accomplishments but how she worked around Jim Crow laws to employ African American artists. With Durieux's assistance, African American artists helped to preserve their important contributions to Louisiana history. This also shows how the FAP and Durieux, through art education, influenced cultural progress for African Americans in Louisiana.

The FAP in Louisiana offered Jones the opportunity to teach art to the underprivileged in New Orleans. Jones stated that the FAP in Louisiana allowed him to, "through my own painting and art teaching to create a more democratic America."<sup>89</sup> Like Durieux, Jones believed that art should be an inherent part of American culture, "regardless of race or creed."<sup>90</sup> Growing up in Lynchburg, Virginia, Jones found it impossible to secure an art education as black public schools did not offer art courses. Seeking better opportunities, Jones moved to Chicago and earned a scholarship to study

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<sup>87</sup> Letter from Durieux to Thomas C. Parker, May 25, 1939, 0068.

<sup>88</sup> Moore, "The life and work of Caroline Spelman Wogan Durieux," 90.

<sup>89</sup> O'Connor, *Art for the Millions*, 199.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 198-199.

at the Art Institute. After four years Jones moved to New Orleans to work at Dillard University to work as an assistant in the Department of Fine Arts.<sup>91</sup> After his position ended at Dillard, Jones sought employment with the FAP. Since black artists worked on separate projects than those of white artists, Jones, Pierce, Lechay, Leonard Scott, and Joseph Williams taught art to African American children and adults. Adult classes were held in the evening and children's classes in the morning.<sup>92</sup> Importantly, Jones was motivated by his past struggles to secure an art education. Jones hoped that art classes would help poor children to redirect their energy to activities other than delinquency.<sup>93</sup> Jones's experience illustrates how the FAP with the assistance of Durieux, contributed to the cultural advancement of African American artists.

Durieux used teaching projects and exhibitions to employ as many artists as teachers as possible, and to create as much art as she could fund. By March of 1939, Durieux had already established a teaching project in Baton Rouge as well as various exhibitions throughout Louisiana. To garner approval from Washington, Durieux sent updates of the project. This included a current summary of progress, future plans, and newspaper articles concerning the recent activities of the FAP in Louisiana. In March, the FAP had exhibitions showing in Baton Rouge, sponsored by the Louisiana State Art Commission, in Covington sponsored by the Fellowship Club, and in Reserve. The latter exhibition was requested for a longer period of time by Mr. J. O. Montegut, the

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<sup>91</sup> O'Connor, *Art for the Millions*, 198.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

superintendent of the St. John Parish schools, in order to place the exhibition in other schools of the parish.<sup>94</sup>

In her efforts to make art for the public, Durieux made art classes available to rural areas of Louisiana as well. Durieux's implementation of teaching programs, among other responsibilities she held as the project director, magnifies the compassion she held for the people and her desire to help others. According to Durieux, there had been considerable criticism in the past that the FAP of Louisiana had concentrated its efforts and work in New Orleans and its surrounding area to the detriment of the rest of the state. She noted that this was something that she would make every possible effort to remedy. The painting and teaching project for children and adults took place at the Old State Capitol Building in Baton Rouge and was sponsored by the Louisiana State Art Commission. A senior member of the Art Project, Jacques de Tarnowsky, instructed the classes. Durieux delivered the announcement of the classes through the Baton Rouge newspapers claiming, "The response was highly enthusiastic; there being forty-one children and thirty adults making application on the first day the classes were held."<sup>95</sup> Again, her vision of working for the people is mirrored in the title of one of the exhibitions, namely the "National Exhibition of the Skills of the Unemployed." By March 17, 1939, only a month after accepting her FAP position, in a flurry of activities Durieux had installed several exhibits, established art classes, and began future plans of expansion

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<sup>94</sup> Letter from Durieux to Thomas C. Parker, March 17, 1939, 0034-0035.

<sup>95</sup> Letter from Durieux to Thomas C. Parker, March 17, 1939, 0034-0035.

for the project.<sup>96</sup> If this were not enough, she also began working on the plans to establish a Federal Art Gallery in New Orleans. That Durieux created an abundance of teaching projects and exhibitions in a short amount of time shows that she recognized the FAP's ability to put art to work for people and people to work for art and the advantages that came from employing more artists.

Her plans for a ceramics unit demonstrates how she used her social position to find patrons who wanted to support public art either by funding or donating to the project, or collaborating with it. In April 1939 Durieux heard that Rutgers in New Jersey sponsored a ceramics unit similar to what she had in mind for the FAP and Louisiana State University. The fact that Rutgers was also sponsoring a ceramics program as well gave Durieux more support towards the eligibility and practicality of her ceramics project proposal. Durieux wanted to use the LSU ceramic department's kiln to fire ceramic sculpture. She collaborated with the architects of the Housing Administration at LSU to sponsor drinking fountains, wading pools, and garden sculptures to be used on the housing projects. One of the architects, Mr. Moise Goldstein, who had worked for the Magnolia Street Housing Project (MSHP), suggested that he would be able to use a ceramic frieze for a pool on the MSHP. Durieux's next plan was to get LSU to sponsor the clay and firing of the ceramic sculpture done on their project. Durieux claimed that since LSU had been doing extensive research in the colored clays available in Louisiana, the aim of their collaboration with the FAP would be for the purpose of using this

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<sup>96</sup> Letter from Durieux to Thomas C. Parker, March 17, 1939, 0034-0035.

research in the making of ceramic friezes. Durieux thought that if the project could get LSU to furnish the clays, and do their firing for them in their kiln, the housing project would be only too glad to use the finished product in their gardens and pools. Again, Durieux's prominent standing in society enabled her to persuade Duncan Ferguson, the sculptor and professor at LSU, to engage enough interest in their project to help them get the University to sponsor the ceramics project.<sup>97</sup> By May, sculptors Rose Marie Alferez and Carl Durel, began working on models for benches, drinking fountains, and wading pools for the MSHP.<sup>98</sup> This ceramic project impressively demonstrates the FAP's ability to include local educational institutions in its efforts to benefit the whole community. Durieux managed to utilize Louisiana's natural resources to bring people together, while at the same time using them as a form of artistic expression via ceramics.

The outlines of any plans for the FAP such as exhibitions, allocations of artwork, and teaching programs had to be made in advance and approved by the program directors in Washington. Before considering the practicality of Durieux's proposal, Parker stated that he should ascertain from her the number of artists employed on the project who were qualified to undertake this type of work.<sup>99</sup> Parker stressed the need to have the very best sculptors assigned to the project. Meeting all the requirements, Durieux hired a ceramic sculptor who had two years of training in Vienna.<sup>100</sup> This suggests even an Austrian influence on the FAP of Louisiana. The ceramics program was approved in April by

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<sup>97</sup> Letter from Durieux to Parker, April 24, 1939, 0051.

<sup>98</sup> Letter from Durieux to Parker, May 25, 1939, 0068.

<sup>99</sup> Letter from Durieux to Parker, April 22, 1939, 0045.

<sup>100</sup> Letter from Durieux to Parker, April 24, 1939, 0051.

Parker under the agreement that it could be initiated on a modest scale and built up as the demand for the work increased. The only drawback he saw was the small quota that the project had in the state, which would limit the amount of assistance she could give the sculptor who would be in charge of the work.<sup>101</sup>

By May of 1939, Durieux continued to employ more artists by creating more projects in rural and urban areas of Louisiana. Sculptors, Hans Mangelsdorf and Alice Fowler began sculpting a direct-carving in brick on the front of the elephant house at the Audubon Zoo, which was sponsored by the Audubon Park Commission.<sup>102</sup> Edward Shoenberger and Amelia Geiger began making sketches for a mural proposal at the Canal Street Branch of the New Orleans Public Library.<sup>103</sup> She expressed a new series of plans for projected work to Crutcher in Baton Rouge. She planned portrait busts for the Louisiana Historical Society, a teaching project in Covington, Louisiana, murals for the Louisiana State Exhibit Building in Shreveport, operating under the supervision of the Department of Agriculture and Immigration, Harry D. Wilson (Commissioner), and W.E. Anderson (State Entomologist). Furthermore, she discussed her plans for the mural at the Negro branch of the Public Library.<sup>104</sup> Her plans for Covington and Shreveport indicate how the FAP impacted rural Louisiana and demonstrates her attempts to make art public everywhere in the state, not only in urban areas.

It is evident that Durieux's privileged upbringing and her social connections

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<sup>101</sup> Letter from Parker to Durieux, April 28, 1939, 0052.

<sup>102</sup> Letter from Durieux to Parker, May 25, 1939, 0068.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Letter from Durieux to Parker, May 25, 1939, 0071.



helped in the formation of the FAP's distinguished advisory board. The purpose of the board was to raise money and create interest to carry out the FAP's plans for an art center. Reflecting the importance of the committee to the FAP, in a letter from Robert Andrews (Assistant to the FAP Director), to Durieux, Andrews stated that the FAP's value to the public should be reflected in active support for the project.<sup>105</sup> The list of members of the State Advisory Committee of the FAP of Louisiana, WPA, reflects the diversity and importance of the project. It shows that the FAP of Louisiana was influenced by different states and cultures, not only Mexican. This list ranged from people in various educational institutions to state commissioners, artists, news publications, art directors, the New Orleans Stock Exchange, architects, and the Iberia Parish Police Jury. The members were not only from New Orleans but New Iberia, Baton Rouge, Pineville, Lafayette, Monroe, and Shreveport. Members included, Mrs. Roger Stone, an official representative in New Orleans of the Modern Museum of art in New York; Richard Foster, director of the Department of Public Welfare; Rufus Harris, the President of Tulane University; E.A. Parsons, President of the Louisiana Historical Society; and the director of the New Orleans Art School of the Arts and Crafts Club of New Orleans.<sup>106</sup> To further illustrate the importance given to make the group diverse, the State Advisory Committee also included, Xavier Gonzales, an assistant professor for the Newcomb Art Department of Tulane University, as well as the Mexican sculptor Alferez mentioned above.

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<sup>105</sup> Letter from Andrews to Durieux, May 29, 1939, 0076-0078.

<sup>106</sup> Letter from Durieux to Parker, May 17, 1939, 0062-0064.

As the WPA came to an end, the FAP helped the country prepare for WWII by designing propaganda posters for the Red Cross, the Army, and the Navy in 1942. Like most New Deal programs, the FAP disappeared. The photograph below shows artists preparing posters.



WPA Artists Prepare Posters for National Defense Program. January 16, 1942. Series Number 07.27. . Project- Art. Series Title- Federal Art Project. WPA Photographs. N.O.P.L. Website. <http://nutrias.org/photos/wpa/images/07/07273.jpg> (Accessed March 22, 2010).

### Durieux Becomes a Public Diplomat

Some of the Louisiana artists were picked to become draftsmen for industrial work. Determined to improve relations with Central and South America, FDR dedicated the U.S. to a “good neighbor” policy in his inaugural address in 1933. However, throughout the 1920s and 1930s the U.S. continued to focus more on Europe and less on Latin America fueling an anti-American sentiment in some parts of Latin America.

Historian Richard Pells argues that the American attempt at reconstructing Europe after World War I through goods and technology formed an anti-American sentiment in some parts of Europe as well.<sup>107</sup> As World War II drew near, the U.S. focused more on its relations with Latin America. With increasing amounts of European immigration to South America, especially German, the U.S. feared that Nazism, Facism, and Communism would spread to Latin America. Meanwhile the Depression caused political and economic uncertainty in the U.S. and Americans were still grappling with the idea of Facism and Communism as they became allies of the Soviet Union. To prepare for the war the U.S. sought to defeat isolationism by expanding military presence in Latin America. The U.S. also wanted to forge a pan-American unity. Lester D. Langley in *America and the Americas: The United States in the Western Hemisphere*, claims that, “the Good Neighbor at war strived to accomplish what in retrospect was a laudable but gargantuan task—to forge a unified hemisphere of democracies in a war against totalitarianism out of disparate cultures and political traditions.”<sup>108</sup> Langley also contends that, “Philanthropic endeavors of the 1920s were transmuted into policies of the Division of Cultural Affairs of the Department of State, whose ideologues (some of the harsh critics of gunboat diplomacy in the old days) now spoke of understanding and the bonds of democracies at war.”<sup>109</sup> Durieux’s work with the State Department shows how the U.S. Government

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<sup>107</sup> Richard Pells, *Not Like Us: How Europeans have loved, hated, and transformed American Culture since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

<sup>108</sup> Lester Langley, *America and the Americas: The United States in the Western Hemisphere* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1989), 152.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

attempted to merge Latin American cultures with American, in the interest of democracy and capitalism. Durieux's work with the State Department shows how the Government used cultured people like Durieux, a natural "bridge builder", to promote FDR's "Good Neighbor" policy and form a pan-American identity.

In 1941, Rene d'Harnoncourt persuaded Durieux to apply to become a representative for a traveling exhibit with the Rockefeller Foundation in 1941.<sup>110</sup> Reflecting how Durieux used her social position to network, she and D'Harnoncourt worked together in Mexico City. Known for their interests in Mexican art, the Rockefeller's hired Rivera to paint a mural reflecting the American and Latin American relationship between those involved in these traveling exhibits. Durieux was a prime candidate for this position. Her prominent social background fostered ties with Latin American elites, she had many contacts in the region from personal experiences prior to 1941, and she spoke Spanish, French, and some Portuguese.<sup>111</sup> Since she was a practicing artist herself, had extensive knowledge of twentieth-century art history, and knew the revolutionary Mexican artists, the State Department knew she could credibly talk about American art and its liberation from European influences. Her position with the State Department allowed Durieux to continue using the government as a vehicle to promote public art by way of a cultural project similar to the WPA.

Sponsored by the State Department in association with New York's Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Durieux traveled to Buenos Aires,

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<sup>110</sup> Moore, "The life and work of Caroline Spelman Wogan Durieux," 91.

<sup>111</sup> Moore, "The life and work of Caroline Spelman Wogan Durieux," 92.

Argentina, Montevideo, Uruguay, and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. To improve U.S. and Latin American relations the title of the exhibit, “North American Paintings” mirrors a U.S. attempt at forging Pan-American unity.<sup>112</sup> In efforts to end the anti-American movement, which began with the idea that the U.S. was devoting more interest to Europe rather than a country in their own hemisphere, Latin America, the title of the exhibit was meant to show Latin America that the U.S. was moving away from European influences. Her personal report provides a glimpse into the cultural, social, and political environment of Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro. As the U.S. searched for cultural identity through its various WPA projects, Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro were doing the same.

The exhibit in Buenos Aires was held in 1941. At this time, the threat of the Axis powers and the wave of European immigration added more social complexity amongst the people of Buenos Aires. Sensitive to constant political change, Argentina endured the effects of the Great Depression. Durieux used her elevated position to promote the exhibit to Argentinean intellectuals, socialites, and government officials. Durieux’s report summarized the exhibits successes and failures. Durieux repeated that Mrs. Julia Bullrich de Saint, socialite and prominent garden club enthusiast, to whom she had delivered a letter from a North American friend, gave a cocktail party a week before the opening for Rene d’Harnoncourt to bring all the important painters and sculptors of Buenos Aires together. Her Mexico experience prepared her well for delving into Buenos Aires’ artistic

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<sup>112</sup> Moore, “The life and work of Caroline Spelman Wogan Durieux,” 91.

scene. Durieux continued; “These artists then invited us to their studios and some very real friendships resulted.”<sup>113</sup>

Durieux used her social position and experiences abroad in her work for the State Department. Durieux understood the complexities that accompanied an opening of an American art exhibit in Argentina. She intricately publicized the exhibition in a way that would show connections and parallels between North American and Latin American culture. Her genteel ways and her reputation as an artist helped build the relationships she established in Buenos Aires. A number of high officials from the National Commission of Fine Arts, headed by the liberal and politically powerful Senator Santamarina, attended the opening by invitation. The American Embassy’s full support of the exhibit gave it an official character and added to the political importance. Durieux noted that the exhibit also had the official blessing of the “Dean” of art critics, Jose Leon Pagano.<sup>114</sup> The fact that the American Embassy and Senator Santamarine were able to meet shows how art was used as a vehicle to bring two disparate cultures together.

Durieux used art as a political vehicle to end Latin American stereotypes of American art and to introduce modern art. In addition, the exhibit showed the citizens of Buenos Aires the U.S.’s national orientation of art. American contemporary art was beginning to break away from European influences. Durieux claimed that the Argentine artists were confused by the lack of European influence in the American paintings.

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<sup>113</sup> Report of Mrs. Caroline Durieux- East Coast Show, Summary for Buenos Aires, Confidential Report for the Museum of Modern Art, January 13, 8. Folder 7, Box 3, X:53, Caroline Wogan Durieux Papers. Mss 3827, LSU.

<sup>114</sup> Report of Mrs. Caroline Durieux- East Coast Show. Summary for Buenos Aires, 11.

However she got to know this group personally and talked to them about the details of the show.<sup>115</sup> These artists were close friends of Senator Santamarine and their discussions reached him. He told Durieux in their parting interview that “he too believed in a national art and breaking away from the influence of Europe.” Durieux continued; “He added that he would from then on give moral and financial support to those painters in the Argentine who were most national in character.”<sup>116</sup>

Through the exhibit, Durieux wanted to change the typical stereotypes about American culture, which were not always the most accurate or positive. She wrote that “the fact that our painting was not European in character was a revelation to the Argentine public and made them think about the meaning of culture in the New World.”<sup>117</sup> Durieux understood that most Americans did not understand the new movement of modern art as well. Relating rural towns in the U.S, where modern art was not known, to Buenos Aires, Durieux wrote, “the American colony reacted on the whole as our nationals at home would have reacted to a show of modern American art.”<sup>118</sup> Durieux understood the transnational complexities of culture and the stereotypes that followed American art. She also knew the importance of education as a means to end the stereotypes. Socially and politically, the exhibit was a great success. Both the American government in Washington and the Embassy in Buenos Aires were solid supporters of the exhibit and offered a new perspective of U.S. culture to the people of Argentina.

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<sup>115</sup> Report of Mrs. Caroline Durieux- East Coast Show. Summary for Buenos Aires, 11.

<sup>116</sup> Report of Mrs. Caroline Durieux- East Coast Show. Summary for Buenos Aires, 12.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 12.

Though the exhibition in Rio de Janeiro was neither a political, social, artistic, or popular success, it was a triumph of publicity due to Durieux's high social status, which garnered more support from the press and helped strengthen her relationship with the U.S. Embassy. Analyzing these failures Durieux stated "On the politico-social front, we failed because the embassy was not with us."<sup>119</sup> The exhibit was also unsuccessful because of the wider influence of conservatives in Brazil. The art season was over when the exhibit opened. The citizens of Rio were not as literate or as drawn to North American culture as the artistic community in Buenos Aires, and the attendance numbers were small. Durieux surmised that the positive publicity may have been a result of the Embassy contacting Lourivel Fontes, the director of the Department of Propaganda. She knew that he had been an admirer of the Axis in the past and wanted to show President Vargas that, "he had a change of heart and was now democratic."<sup>120</sup> Durieux also claimed that the public success, through interviews and critical articles by well-known writers, was the result of her personal contacts, intellectual friends in Brazil (writers, poets, and academics) introduced her to the important art critics and directors of the newspapers. Durieux's report on Rio noticed the opposition stemming from the conflicted social issues of the country and its difficult turn toward democracy. The report also shows that any change, regardless of how small, can make a difference.

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<sup>119</sup> Report of Mrs. Caroline Durieux- East Coast Show. Summary for Rio de Janeiro. Confidential Report for the Museum of Modern Art. January 13, 1. Folder 7, Box 3, X:53, Caroline Wogan Durieux Papers, Mss 3827, LSU.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 2.



In the case of Buenos Aires, the collaboration of the American Embassy with the National Commission of Fine Arts, forced Argentine citizens to see their government in a different light. This exhibit reflects the new public diplomacy that was practiced by the U.S. government in sponsoring art as an instrument of democratic propaganda. Overall the exhibits proved successful in helping the U.S. improve relations with Latin America by showing its citizens that America was moving away from European influences. In *Born in Blood & Fire: A Concise History of Latin America*, John Charles Chasteen claims “After the U.S. entered war, all the countries of Latin America eventually joined as allies.”<sup>121</sup> Relations between Latin America and the U.S. became friendlier than ever before or since.<sup>122</sup>

After spending six months in South America, Durieux returned to New Orleans to maintain her position as an Instructor of art at Newcomb and administrator for the WPA in 1941. In 1943 she left to work on her Master of Arts in Fine Arts and to work as an art instructor at LSU. She taught lithography until her retirement in 1963.<sup>123</sup> After Mr. Durieux’s death in 1949 and as the Cold War raged between the allies of the U.S. and the Soviet Union, Durieux worked with the Department of Nuclear Science at LSU, utilizing radioactive ink to develop a new printing technique called the electron print.<sup>124</sup> For nearly sixty years, she created more than four hundred pieces.<sup>125</sup> She also published two books

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<sup>121</sup> John Charles Chasteen, *Born in Blood & Fire: A Concise History of Latin America*, (North Carolina: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006) 238.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> John Pope, “Louisiana satirical artist Caroline Durieux dies at 93,” Times-Picayune, November 30, 1989.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Moore, “The Life and Work of Caroline Spelman Wogan Durieux,” 1.

featuring collections of her work. In the 1950s Durieux traveled to Europe to work in the well-known ateliers of Desjobert and Lacourière in Paris. She also traveled to the Near and Far East. Durieux died from complications from a stroke in 1989.

As New Deal historiography continues to evolve, Durieux's work with the WPA and State Department illuminates the importance of regional studies and women's roles and influence in New Deal history. This study shows that the accomplishments made by the FAP and its administrators differed by region, providing a building block for future regional studies in the New Deal. This study also shows how the Federal Art Project of Louisiana redefined art as a common element in American life by providing cultural progressives with an agency to put their ideas into action. The WPA and the State Department provided Durieux with the cultural landscape to put the ideas she had learned in Mexico into practice. She effectively used her social position to bring together wealthy patrons with art projects that would support the needs of working class people. Durieux used public art as a vehicle to support artists during the Depression. Her life deserves far more attention than the scope of this study allowed and further exploration will provide a better understanding of Louisiana's cultural history as well as the FAP's impact on America's cultural history.

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